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Date 2-10-75

Initial E.K.G.

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: January 27, 1975

SUBJECT: Foreign Minister Kifle's Call on the Secretary

PARTICIPANTS: ETHIOPIA
Foreign Minister and Ambassador to the U.S.
KIFLE Wodajo
Counselor of Embassy Ghebeyehou MEKBIB

UNITED STATES
The Secretary
Arthur Hummel, Ambassador-designate to Ethiopia
Wendell B. Coote, Director AF/E (notetaker)

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THE SECRETARY: I am pleased to see you Mr. Minister. I am sorry that I was detained at the White House last week and could not see you then.

FOREIGN MINISTER: That's fully understandable. I know how busy you are.

THE SECRETARY: It is not a question of being busy but of not being able to leave the President's office. I'm sorry.

FOREIGN MINISTER: The circumstances were explained to me. I had a fruitful conversation with Mr. Sisco.

THE SECRETARY: I didn't realize that we were engaged in a monumental protocol struggle in Addis as to who would take the initiative in arranging a call by our Charge on the Chairman of the Council of Ministers. I am sending instructions to our Charge today to call on the Chairman. (To Ambassador Hummel) Did the instruction go out?

HUMMEL: It has come to the Seventh Floor.

THE SECRETARY: I'll make sure it goes out. I am in the hands of two FSO's, both juvenile delinquents. They think I shouldn't be exposed to any practical problem. I will straighten this out. We have an interest in maintaining friendly relations with Ethiopia.

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We are sending one of our best people as Ambassador.

FOREIGN MINISTER: I am most appreciative for your agreeing to receive me. I had been instructed to seek this meeting with you by the Provisional Military Government (PMG). Fundamental and dramatic changes have occurred in Ethiopia over the last several months. Inevitably these changes are viewed differently by people with different perspectives. They give rise to all sorts of speculation regarding the future. The PMG, in view of the traditional Ethiopian-U.S. relations, is desirous that I explain to your government the purposes and direction of these changes and the hopes and aspirations of the Ethiopian people. I have also been instructed to explain to the United States the new government's wishes for the future of our relations, as well as its concern over the general security problem in the area.

First, the internal changes. I have been asked to make clear to the U.S. Government that these changes relate solely to internal factors and are not directed at any external factor. The PMG wishes to maintain its traditional relations with the U.S. and with other countries on the basis of equality and respect for each other's sovereignty. Our foreign policy objectives are mainly to forge closer ties with our neighbors and with other African countries.

THE SECRETARY: Does that include Somalia?

FOREIGN MINISTER: Yes, we also want to work with the developing countries in working out conditions for promoting development and to work with the OAU and UN. All our traditional ties and relations should be preserved and strengthened in a direction accruing to the interests of the Ethiopian people. The changes are mainly to improve internal conditions and to promote better social justice and distribution of the fruits of economic development on an equitable basis. They are designed to produce a more representative government by getting people to participate directly in the government. We want to lay the foundation for a future representative government.

Regarding U.S.-Ethiopian relations, I have been instructed to communicate personally to you--and I was called home for consultations in preparation for this meeting--my government's appreciation for the assistance which the U.S. Government has continued to give Ethiopia. We are most appreciative for past support and hope that the United States will increase its drought, economic and military assistance in recognition of the growing requirements of Ethiopia. We would like to continue joint

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consultations as needed to see how the U.S. can respond most effectively to our requirements. We believe that the United States and Ethiopia have a mutuality of interests in the area of the Horn of Africa, and we hope that this mutuality of interests will continue to guide our relations and will grow on the basis of respect for each other's sovereignty and aspirations.

The third point is the PMG's concern regarding the security problem in the area. Over the past several years, there have been fundamental changes which have given rise to certain uncertainties and a declining sense of security. The changes in our part of the world have been abrupt and have caused us serious concern. They result primarily from the USSR's giving weapons in a quantity and of a sophisticated quality previously unknown in the area. This has upset the traditional balance of power in the Horn. We feel there is an emergency situation which we are preparing for. We have discussed the specifics of the program to meet this emergency with the U.S. Government.

The program for which we require U.S. support is to strengthen our defense. The Somalis have a decided superiority in every category of weapons. Somali ground forces have a three to one superiority in tanks and include many T-54 tanks. The Somalis have a modern air force with MIG-21's. There is nothing comparable on the Ethiopian side. The Somalis have a strike force adapted to aerial warfare and a highly sophisticated air defense system, including seven radars, and SAM-7 anti-aircraft missiles. Ethiopia has no radar, no air defense system and no missiles. The Somalis have a decided superiority in both offense and defense. Ethiopia has no offensive capability in any area and its defense is alarmingly poor. The program submitted to the U.S. Government is to develop our defensive capability and includes radar, anti-air defense, and a small number of tanks. All weapons are defensive.

THE SECRETARY (to Ambassador Hummel): When are you going out to Addis?

HUMMEL: The Senate has not yet confirmed me, nor has it scheduled the confirmation hearings. I plan to go out as soon thereafter as possible.

THE SECRETARY: I believe strongly in close U.S.-Ethiopian relations, and I am delighted that your Government wants to continue the traditional close ties. That reflects our thinking. I know that the Ambassador will carry out this policy with his usual skill and decisiveness. I hope he will treat you better than he treats me. He is a mean officer.

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FOREIGN MINISTER: I don't want to burden you with the details of our program. We have been discussing them with members of your staff.

THE SECRETARY: Frankly we have no idea what is going on in Ethiopia. Since the events in November there has been total confusion on our part. We know you personally and have total confidence in you. Ambassador Hummel will go out with every intention on our part to develop our relations as you described, which is just what we want. Within the framework of our continuing good relations and of Congressional restrictions I am sympathetic to being as helpful as possible. We were prepared to expand our military assistance to the previous government, and we are prepared to expand it with this government. The best approach is for Ambassador Hummel to discuss the subject with you as soon as he gets to Ethiopia and to come up with a program.

HUMMEL: I believe the Minister would like to have some consultations here before he returns, particularly to work out the financial side of the military assistance programs. I think the Minister will agree that we have demonstrated a forthcoming stance by having on the table some papers ready to sign now. It has been a question of whether the Ethiopians would pay in cash or credits.

THE SECRETARY: We are sympathetic with the programs.

FOREIGN MINISTER: There is the element of time which I would like to mention. We have set June 1975 as the deadline for completing our defense preparations. We need to augment our defensive capability by then.

THE SECRETARY: I have to find out what the situation is. We are willing to give you special consideration. (to Ambassador) Please get me a paper on where things stand. (to Foreign Minister) Do you want the equipment delivered or agreed to by June?

FOREIGN MINISTER: We would like to have most of the equipment delivered by then. We need radar and we have also asked for F5E aircraft.

THE SECRETARY: I understand there are some F5A's from Iran which will help to fill the gap.

FOREIGN MINISTER: I was told by Mr. Sisco the other day that the U.S. might have a limited number of F5E's which could be made available to Ethiopia.

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HUMMEL: There is a considerable problem in getting all the equipment to Ethiopia by June. The manufacturing lead times in many cases are difficult. We have already had 2 or 3 meetings since the Foreign Minister saw Mr. Sisco last week. I have talked with Defense. Mr. Sisco also held a meeting. We have discussed some flexibility, but we don't think it is possible to get all the hardware to Ethiopia by June.

FOREIGN MINISTER: If the best effort is made, that will help.

HUMMEL: Was the June deadline set because President Siad will no longer be President of the OAU, following which you expect the Somalis will launch an attack?

FOREIGN MINISTER: We have hard intelligence that the Somalis do plan to initiate hostilities against us. It is a question of timing. They are following internal developments in Ethiopia very closely.

THE SECRETARY: Let us see what we can find, then we can see when we can deliver it. We will look at the problem.

HUMMEL: The letter of offer for Vulcan missiles has been ready for signature for three months. It can be signed any time you decide how you will pay for it, in cash or credits.

FOREIGN MINISTER: Can additional credits be made available under the presidential authority in this year's Foreign Assistance Act to waive the African ceiling?

HUMMEL (to Secretary): We plan to put forward a favorable recommendation to you to seek a waiver.

THE SECRETARY: I need a program. Work something out with the Foreign Minister and do it fast.

FOREIGN MINISTER: There is one final thing. The PMG has a long-range program for the modernization of its armed forces. This is a separate program. I have been asked to inquire whether the U.S. Government will be willing to cooperate as in the past in seeing this program through. When it takes final shape, we will let you know.

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THE SECRETARY: I will be interested in seeing what the program looks like, and whether there may be any problems with respect to Congressional constraints. In principle, yes, we would like to help you. We can discuss the long-range program when Ambassador Hummel gets to Ethiopia. In principle, we are prepared to consider it. We will try to be as cooperative as possible. I want you to know that we wish you personally and your country well.

FOREIGN MINISTER: Thank you for your good wishes and for your cooperation.

THE SECRETARY: Give my regards to your colleagues. When are you returning?

FOREIGN MINISTER: In two weeks or so. I would like to have some indication as to where we are going before I leave.

THE SECRETARY: Has your replacement been named yet?

FOREIGN MINISTER: No, but we will get someone here soon.

THE SECRETARY: I will probably see you at the UN.

Drafted: ^{WBC} AF/E:WBCoote:crj
X29742:1/27/75

^{AF} Clearance: AF/E-Amb. Hummel

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